

The Builder.

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WRITERS on architectural history have never failed to dwell on the extraordinary activity displayed by the church builders of the mediæval period, and the great number of structures with which England was covered, almost as if by magic. "The land was as one vast workshop" has been echoed and re-echoed, and the strongest words used to impress this fact on their readers. An examination of what remains, scattered over our beautiful, and notwithstanding the income tax, still "merry England," shews that all our notions on this head, gained from these verbal statements, fall far short of the truth. Fanaticism, ignorance, and time have done their work with a vengeance; but still in the valley and on the hill,—in hamlet, village, town, and city, stand the beautiful monuments of the "dark ages," full of pleasant memories, beauty, and holiness. Misdirected zealots, penurious owners, improving churchwardens, and parish road-menders were beaten hollow and gave in, after a tough fight. To count those edifices which remain is still scarcely possible; many of them are yet not catalogued. But better times have come: the beauty of these structures, their value as works for imitation and as historical landmarks, are more fully recognized than they were, and will, it may be hoped, lead to their continued preservation.

Mr. Edmund Sharpe, in his work just now completed, under the title of "Architectural Parallels," intended to shew the progress of ecclesiastical architecture in England through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, by means of a series of parallel examples,* affords a striking proof of the extent of our architectural riches. In this very admirable work, which claims from us the most prominent and emphatic notice that we can give, the illustrations embrace fourteen abbey churches of such great beauty and extent, that it might be supposed all England had been laid under contribution to produce them; yet on examination they are found to be, with two exceptions, all from one county, namely, Yorkshire.

A few words from the author's prospectus will best explain the nature of the undertaking:—

"As the design of this work is to exhibit, in the order in which they occurred, the *progressive changes* that took place in our national architecture during its most interesting periods, the subjects have been so selected as to present parallel instances of the manner in which the same feature was treated by the builders of different ages. Thus one portion of the work is devoted to the illustration of four or five interior compartments of the different churches selected, commencing from the earliest, in which so much of the building remains perfect, and descending to the latest; another portion to the illustration of four or five exterior compartments; a third to the transverse sections; a fourth to the east ends; two plates present the profiles of the different piers; others those of the capitals and bases, arch-mouldings, ribs, window-jambs, and so on. The perspective

views are generally taken from the same points of view; and the details drawn, as far as is practicable, to the same scale. The whole work, therefore, comprises, as its title implies, a collection of such *parallels*.

The advantage of thus placing in juxtaposition and in chronological order the same parts of different buildings designed, as the abbey churches were, for the same purpose, and remaining, as they almost exclusively do, without subsequent alteration or addition, will at once be apparent to those who are interested in the study of ecclesiastical architecture."

The list comprises Fountains, Kirkstall, Ryland, Whitby, Rievaulx, Netley, Tintern, St. Mary's at York, Bridlington, Guisborough, Selby and Howden; and these are fully set forth in 121 lithographic plates, in tinted outline, each 18 inches by 12 inches,—unusually large. They are capitally drawn, and make the details perfectly clear.

Great praise is due to Mr. Sharpe both for the idea and the way in which it is carried out. However interesting and valuable the illustration of the smaller buildings, such as parish churches are, as evincing frequently much ingenuity, originality, and good feeling, and often containing individual features of great beauty, it is in the larger conventual and cathedral churches that we are to look for the best record of the history of the art, and it is in these buildings, raised up for the same purpose, and remaining, as they almost exclusively do, in the condition they were in when consecrated, that we are to trace the progress of architecture. Departing from the practice of our day which is, to give the best and most obvious of many, rather than the whole of one,—to skim rather than dive,—our author has seized a speciality, and worked it thoroughly. Such a course is costly and laborious, and withal the buyers of such a book are necessarily fewer than of more general works: there is the greater reason, therefore, why the persons to whom such works are of real importance, should aid in rewarding those who have sufficient spirit, energy, and ability to produce them.

The plates may be put together in two ways, namely, first, keeping all the illustrations of each separate building together, and, secondly, arranging them in such a manner as "to present parallel examples of the manner in which the same feature was treated by the builders of different ages." The latter is the right way to make the collection fulfil its purpose, and when so arranged, an examination of it becomes most interesting and instructive.*

Those who are conversant with architecture will know, from the dates over which the work extends, that it embraces the transition from Norman (with the semicircular arch prevailing), the early English, the transition to Decorated, and the first examples of the latter style. The illustrations begin with Fountains and Kirkstall, where we find in a Norman nave the main arches which carry the clerestory pointed, all the other arches being semicircular, and ends with the magnificent east end of Howden, displaying the crocketed gables, traceried windows, and ornamental niches of the decorated style. The gradual progress is apparent. The thick walls and shallow buttresses of the Norman builders are seen to give place to thinner inclosures, with boldly-projecting buttresses where strength is needed. Narrow lancet-headed openings at first suffice for light and appearance; then three or five are gathered together under one embracing arch,

the centre opening being elongated, the better to fill up the space so circumscribed. To lighten the spandrells thus left between the high central light and the lower lights on each side, openings are made in them, and the result is a three-light window, with an approach to tracery in the head. Later in the style (the early English) geometrical forms are introduced to diversify and strengthen the heads of windows, and imperceptibly lead to the beautiful flowing tracery which distinguishes the decorated period, the chief glories of which belong to the fourteenth century.

We shall hope to see similar parallel illustrations of the buildings of this latter style and of those of the perpendicular period, with their,—

"branching roofs
Self-poised, and scooped into a thousand cells.
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering—and wandering on as loth to die,
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality."

Mr. Sharpe's work is at present under a disadvantage, inasmuch as it has no letter-press. At the instance of several of his professional subscribers, the author has been induced to prepare for publication in a separate form, and as a supplement to the "Parallels," the full-sized drawings of the profiles of all the mouldings contained in the work, having their subordination, and the joints of the stonework marked upon them. He hopes, with reason, that this—the first work of the kind on such a subject, will be found to be a useful adjunct to the "Parallels," although not essential to the scheme of his work, the object of which is to present a general and comprehensive view of the architecture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and its regular progress, rather than to supply the architect with a stock of promiscuous detail. Still, of these details it will be found to present a very valuable collection.

With this supplement the letter-press will appear in the shape of a separate volume, containing a detailed description of the buildings illustrated, and a general review of the progress of church architecture through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. We shall then return to a consideration of the work; and, in the meantime, offer the warmest commendation and thanks to Mr. Sharpe, for the great service he has rendered to the art by the publication of this important and beautiful work.

ON THE ANCIENT BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE OF INDIA.*

THE Dagobas, Stuphas, Chaityas, and Viharas, mentioned in the first part of my communication, are the four principal forms of Buddhist architecture, and the only ones it is necessary, or that I have time, to particularise. But I must now say a few words regarding the architectural forms and peculiarities of the buildings themselves.

First, then, with regard to the pillars. All pillars in India were originally square, and set up as such; the angles are then cut off at a certain height, so as to make them into octagons; the operation is again repeated, so as to make sixteen sides. Sometimes I have seen thirty-two introduced; but more often when this is attempted this division becomes circular, and remains so. Another peculiarity is the bracket capital, which is universal, and does not exist in any other style that I am aware of, though for trabecate architecture it is, I feel convinced, not only decoratively but constructively a great improvement in the mode adopted by the Egyptians or the abacus of the Greeks.

The entablatures are generally only repetitions of a wooden beam, serving as an archi-

* "Architectural Parallels: or, the Progress of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England, through the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, exhibited in a series of Parallel Examples, selected from various Abbey Churches." By Edmund Sharpe, M.A., Architect, Lancaster. London: John Van Voorst.

* The similarity of the general form and arrangement in buildings extending over a considerable period of time, and at the same time originality and beauty of the special differences, are very striking. The width of all the churches given, ranges between 60 feet and 70 feet: with only two or three exceptions, the extent of the transept, from north to south, is double the width of the church.

* See p. 135 under.